

City of Alexandria, Virginia

PARK AND RECREATION COMMISSION

Regular Meeting

Thursday, November 21, 2013, 7:00 p.m.

Charles Houston Community Center

901 Wythe Street

Alexandria, Virginia 22314

Summary Minutes

PRC Members Present: Judy Guse-Noritake, Chairperson, Jennifer Atkins, Gina Baum, Stephen Beggs, Rich Brune, Judith Coleman, William Cromley, Brian McPherson.

Excused: Ripley Forbes, Emma Schutzius.

RPCA Staff Present: James B. Spengler, Director; William Chesley, Deputy Director, Recreation Services; Dinesh Tiwari, Deputy Director, Park Operations; Jack Browand, Division Chief, Marketing, Special Events and Waterfront Operations; Laura Durham, Principal Planner and Open Space Coordinator; Dana Wedeles, Park Planner; David Ghezzi, Architect; Kelly Gilfillen, Marketing Manager; Robin DeShields, Executive Assistant.

Absent: Ron Kagawa, Division Chief, Park Planning, Design and Capital Development.

Guests: Richard Baier, Director, Transportation and Environmental Services (T&ES); Nathan Imm, Urban Planner III, Planning and Zoning (P&Z); Jonathan Krall, Alexandria Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Committee (BPAC); Kevin V. Posey, Alexandria Transportation Commission.

- I. Call to Order by Chair, Judy Guse-Noritake.** The meeting was called to order at 7:07 p.m. The Chair said that Ripley Forbes and Emma Schutzius had excused absences.

II. Presentations:

- a. **Proposed Bike Lanes on King Street:** Rich Baier, Director, Department of Transportation, Environmental Services (T&ES) gave a brief presentation on the King Street Bicycle Lanes and Pedestrian Improvements Project.

For more information, go to

<http://www.alexandriava.gov/localmotion/info/default.aspx?id=74320>

Baier said the Bicycle Master Plan includes adding bicycle lanes along King Street between Russell Road and Janney's Lane, a project that is small but has drawn significant media attention and will likely affect residential parking in adjacent neighborhoods. He said concerns were raised at community meetings about the proposal to remove parking along the north side of King Street to create a dedicated bike lane. Baier said T&ES did a parking utilization study that showed current on-street parking from Highland Place to Janney's Lane at less than five cars a day during the p.m. hours. T&ES had reviewed residences to ensure there is ample off-street parking for at least two cars per residence. He said some larger homes have circular driveways that can accommodate 7-10 vehicles.

Krall a member of the City's Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Committee (BPAC) said that there are approximately 11 bikes per hour during rush hour. Making the streets more bicycle-friendly would encourage more bicycle usage. Baier said T&ES is looking at how to enhance

the ways pedestrians can get to the King Street Metro station and down the hill. He said currently pedestrians are poorly served by sidewalks only 3-4 feet wide and access to transit centers is poor for both bicyclists and pedestrians. The Chair said it should be a designated "Safe Route to School" for children traveling to and from T.C. Williams High School by bike. Baier said the Transportation Master Plan approved in 2008 includes building infrastructure to accommodate bikes on both sides of the street. He said staff is working with the BPAC on how to address the issues raised. The Chair said the original Bicycle Master Plan was done by a sub-committee of the P&RC. Baier said he will invite a member of the P&RC to be on the group. He wants to be sure to accommodate all types of cyclists. Posey said modern transportation tries to separate bikes and pedestrians to minimize conflict.

Commissioner Comments:

Cromley said parked cars pose a problem for bikes and asked what crosswalk-related concerns had been identified. Baier said: (1) daytime and overnight parking, and (2) service deliveries by commercial vehicles were issues. He said residents are concerned about the potential loss of parking spaces but only a few cars use them on a normal basis.

Beggs said parking spaces are important to residents living on the north side of King Street, from Highland Place to Janney's Lane, and removing them may affect property values. Baier said this was not a major issue brought up by residents. Posey said the section from Highland Place to Janney's Lane would keep its parking and adding traffic calming measures help property values. Baier said there are 27 largely unused parking spaces between Cedar Street and Highland Place. He said residents may be impacted more at certain times.

The Chair said the City's planning for parks, recreation and transportation needs to accommodate bicyclists. Baier said every non-HOV initiative has been difficult to move forward because currently most people don't use bikes as their primary mode of travel and the City is trying to change this. He said a public hearing will be held before the Traffic and Parking Board on November 25, 2013.

McPherson said residents' concerns have included whether the estimate of 11 bikes per hour is correct, that converting two lanes to dedicated bike use will leave too little room for two buses to pass each other, and that speed mitigation tables are needed. He said he wants to review the graphic of affected parking spaces before endorsing the plan. Baier said King Street is an arterial route and the City does not put speed tables on primary routes. He provided McPherson a copy of the plan's graphic/map.

Atkins said there should be separate lanes for bikes and cars going up the hill. Beggs said the problem is there are few ways to get down to the Metro from on top of the hill. Baier said the lane is 11 feet wide and the parking lane consumes 7 feet.

The Chair said the majority of P&RC members said the compromise configuration is a positive step that will encourage more bicycle use in the City, making this heavily travelled route safer now and in the future, and responds as much as possible to neighborhood concerns about off-street parking.

Action: Brune moved that the P&RC support the compromise plan. Beggs seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously. The Chair said she would send an email to the Director T&ES recapping discussion.

Stormwater Ordinance Update: Coleman asked Baier for a brief update of the storm water ordinance. Baier said there is a multi-departmental group working on the storm water project. James Spengler, Director RPCA is on Storm Water Steering Committee. The Chair said

P&RC is very concerned with storm water management and asked she be notified of future meetings. Baier said T&ES is working with RPCA staff, and will notify the Chair as meetings occur. He will ask William Skrabak, T&ES Deputy Director for Environmental Quality, to attend the January P&RC meeting to provide an update.

b. **2013 Needs Assessment, Leisure Vision Survey-Laura Durham:**

Durham provided an update on the 2013 Needs Assessment Survey prepared by Leisure Vision - See Presentation dated November 21, 2013, and also see Needs Assessment Executive Summary Report:

<http://www.alexandriava.gov/uploadedFiles/recreation/info/NeedsAssessPRCPresentation.pdf>

<http://www.alexandriava.gov/uploadedFiles/recreation/info/2013AlexandriaNeedsAssessFinalReport.pdf>

Durham said that the first Needs Assessment was completed in 2002, and updated in 2011, and a short version in 2013. RPCA will complete a longer version every five years and a short version every two years. Staff is working on tying completion of the survey with the budget and City Council strategic goals. The Needs Assessment helps create benchmarks and helps staff look at trends. 5000 surveys were sent out randomly, 850 responses were received (a minimum of 600 responses were needed.)

- Cromley said users of parks were not included. Durham said she will send link to the complete survey (survey has 500 pages and will be placed on the internet). Durham reviewed survey data and answered questions from the group. Some identified unmet needs were down from 2011 some were up-See Survey. Durham said staff also has cross-tabs showing the different age groups. 2011 data is available and can be compared to 2013 – both are available on -line. She said that the Needs Assessment is not a standalone document staff is looking at trends.
- Coleman commented that the Chart shows that there are 20-30 year olds having children and leaving the City. Durham said the 2010 Census showed a dip in school age children, staff will discuss demographics at a future meeting. The Chair said she disagrees with the concept that families with children will leave the City. Every Smart Growth expert says that there will be more children with families living in the City as it becomes more urban. Atkins said ACPS published their statistics showing retention of school age children, however their numbers were off.
- The Chair asked at what point would information go to City Council, and could this be done in advance of budget. Durham said an overview will be sent to City Council with a copy of the Executive Summary.
- Baum asked if survey can be shared with the Olin Group (Waterfront Plan Architects)

Items for Action:

III. **Approval of Summary Minutes: October 24, 2013** - deferred to January 2014.

IV. **Braddock Neighborhood Park – Interim Open Space Plan**- Nathan Imm, Urban Planner III, Department of Planning & Zoning, gave a presentation - See Attachment -Braddock Neighborhood Interim Park Option 3-Potential Completion. Durham said the property was acquired in 2010 and is located at 600 N. Henry Street (Route 1). The goal of the Braddock Small Area Plan is to have a one acre park on this site. The tenants have vacated the building and it will be demolished this winter. The Braddock Implementation Advisory Group is looking at programming needs for the one-acre park, but it could take five or more years to develop the site. Imm said staff has had regular contact with the Post Office to help facilitate their move to another site. Staff prepared three different alternatives for interim public open space at the October

meeting with the advisory group. The advisory group does not want to use the Braddock open space funds for the Interim Park. The fund does however, have money for demolition. A few changes were made to the Preferred Alternative based on that meeting: a part of the park perimeter will include an area delineated with planting for a “dog relief” to encourage dogs not to “go” in the park itself. Durham said on the corners opposite the Starbucks, and the new residential/retail building (the Asher), will be seating, a community table, and activity areas. Staff is also working with the police regarding safety improvements. No other large changes came from the Advisory Group. Staff will provide signage stating that it is an Interim Park (not permanent). Durham said the next step would be an RFP for a conceptual design for the full one-acre park. A public hearing will be held and the item will come back to the P&RC. The project is multi-tiered process for the block, three parties involved: the City, the developer, and the Post Office.

Beggs asked if there are two parcels, and if there is underground parking. Durham said yes, both have the same zoning, underground parking is anticipated under the building portion of the site. The City hopes to install the interim park improvements in April/May 2014, pending the public hearing by P&RC January 2014 on adopting the Interim Park Plan. An Environmental Assessment was completed prior to acquisition of the site and there no significant environmental impacts related to demolition.

In response to McPherson, the Chair said the bike share station is well used and there are new large residential developments, the Henry and the Asher, near the site. The project will include a communal table or group of tables to hold about 30 people as well as an open lawn. Imm said there will be a sign stating no off-leash dogs. Baum suggested there be areas where dogs are not allowed at all on the open grassy area. Imm said he can discuss with staff. Durham said the project budget is \$200,000.

V. Division Updates: To view copy of full staff reports, please go to:
<http://www.alexandriava.gov/uploadedFiles/recreation/info/PRCStaffReport21November2013.pdf>

- A. Recreation Programs and Service Update - William Chesley, Deputy Director - See Staff Report.
- B. Park Operations Report – Dinesh Tiwari, Deputy Director - See Staff Report.
- C. Marketing, Special Events, Waterfront Operations - Jack Browand, Division Chief - See Staff Report. The Chair said the new Waterfront Market opens for business on November, 26, an unveiling was held last Sunday. She said it is a great market and that people should check it out.
- D. Park Planning, Design & Capital Development Reports – Ron Kagawa, Division Chief and Team: See Staff Reports.
 - 1. Active Park Projects including Capital Improvement Projects (CIP)
 - Update of Selected Projects
 - 2. Active Capital Facilities Maintenance Projects (CFMP) Report
 - Update on Selected Projects
 - 3. Chinquapin HVAC Renovation – Progress Update Memorandum
 - 4. Spring 2013 CIP External Project Requests Update Memorandum
 - W&OD Off-Leash Dog Exercise Area
 - Commonwealth Medians

VI. Joint Meeting, Waterfront and Park & Recreation Commissions,
Tuesday, December 17, 2013, 7:30 a.m. - Waterfront SAP: Program Analysis,
Art, History and Lighting – Jack Browand said the tentative date for a joint meeting to discuss the concept plan is December, 17, 2013, 7:30 a.m. to be confirmed. Preliminary concept design to be presented. Put on calendar, location the Lyceum.

VII. Reports from Commissioners

- A. **Waterfront Commission** - Gina Baum.
- **Old Dominion Boat Club** (ODBC). The Commission held a special meeting to hear from ODBC and City representatives and later recommended to Council a compromise position be sought, negotiators be given 90 days to try to reach an agreement, and made some suggestions about a process that might be used.
 - **Beachcombers Property** - The City has received three proposals in response to its Request for Proposals. Some Commissioners question if the proposals are viable in that they would return a fair-market land and building rent back to the Open Space Fund. Durham said an expert analysis of the viability of the three proposals' business plans is being completed as part of the City's review of the proposals. The Chair testified on the importance of the City taking back Wales Alley Extended, as it is City property, and said the City should keep working to gain access to the waterfront for use as public open space.
- B. **Youth Sport Committee**. Brian McPherson said Kelly Gilfilen, Marketing Manager for RPCA, attended the meeting and provided a marketing presentation. The Chair said an ongoing issue is parents' access to information in the Program Guide on available sports programs. McPherson suggested making RPCA website more user-friendly. Baum asked if demographics on who uses the website are done. She said younger persons may prefer to use the website; while older persons may prefer using the Program Guide.
- C. **Four Mile Run** - Ripley Forbes (absent).
- D. **Freedmen's Cemetery**. The Chair reported that an article was in newspaper. Receipt of stone for the base is pending.
- E. **ACPS & Capital Improvements** - Judy Guse-Noritake. Jefferson Houston School is in progress, Patrick Henry School is moving forward. The lights for the tennis courts at T.C. Williams H.S. were approved by Planning and Zoning. The Chair will write a letter.
- F. **Community Gardens Policy**- Judy Guse-Noritake. Dinesh Tiwari, Deputy Director, Park Operations and Natural Resources, is working on a garden policy, drafts are circulating internally. The Chair asked to review the draft prior to its going to the full commission.
- G. **Ft. Ward** - Ripley Forbes (absent). Rich Brune reported that the project overall is progressing well. Durham said a Draft Management Plan is expected to be done in January 2014. A joint meeting with the involved boards/commissions, including the PRC will be held on the Draft Management Plan in the spring 2014.
- H. **ACPS School Projects**- Judy Guse-Noritake- See Item E.
- I. **Jefferson Houston School** – William Cromley- See Item E.
- J. **Open Space** - Judy Guse-Noritake: Durham said she is meeting with the internal staff group every two weeks. An Open Space Summit is planned for March 2014.
- K. **Braddock Plan Park**- Judy Guse-Noritake - See Item #IV.
- L. **Patrick Henry School Update** - No updates.

M. **Aquatics Update** - Atkins said she and Durham had a good discussion, representing a variety of perspectives, with Advocates for Alexandria Aquatics (AAA) members. Atkins said the staff and consultant recommendations are close and discussions will continue, but are on hold until the feasibility study to determine if Chinguapin can fit a 50-meter pool is complete. The Chair said the City Manager is seeking direction for budget season. Durham said within 30 days from Task I; staff expects to have an idea if a 50-meter pool would fit. Atkins said the priority list will stay almost the same and both sides' priorities are close. The Chair said she would wait to write a letter on aquatics.

Potomac Yards Park - Jack Browand said the Potomac Yards Park dedication was set for December 14, 2013 at 8:30 a.m. and invited Commissioners to attend.

VIII. Public Comments - on other topics. No public comments were received.

IX. Agenda items for January 16, 2014, meeting and location. To be determined.

X. List of upcoming public meetings. - A list was provided in packet.

XI. Adjournment:
Brune motioned to adjourn the meeting. Baum seconded. The motion passed unanimously. The meeting adjourned 8:55 p.m.